

Etzig, Trista

From: mr.maze@maizevalley.com
Sent: Friday, April 21, 2006 7:44 PM
To: Scblockgrants,
Subject: Specialty Crops Act
Attachments: ATTACHMENT.TXT

Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA

Greetings from Maize Valley Farm Market and Winery.

In regards to the legislation passed in 2004 which allocated \$7 million, of a total of \$44 million dollars to enhance the competitiveness specialty crops we have some comments we would like you consider. The original language did not include priority to **fresh** specialty crops. We understand that this is the case now. This priority would put our winery enterprise at a disadvantage. As growers of a variety fresh fruits and vegetables we find our ability to vertically integrate from the raw product to a non-perishable value added consumer product the key to our survival as a family farm. Our families journey in Agriculture begins in the 1800's and we have constantly been challenged to adapt. The winery enterprise has shown us the best opportunity of any venture we have undertaken related to agriculture. Please help us to make this transition by not limiting our options in regards to what we produce. Limiting these monies to only fresh crops puts a variety of restrictions beyond all the variables connected to agriculture production that we cannot control. The entire point of our diversification into the winery enterprise was to find more uses for crops subject to short shelf life and continued pressure from low cost foreign sources. Our ability to directly market our locally produced products in a value added form along with the experience of the connection for consumers to the producer has proven invaluable. We have applied for USDA VAPA grants in the past. We have yet to be successful however we would still like to have the opportunity to do so in the future. Please consider not limiting the language to only fresh product.

Sincerely

Bill Bakan (part owner/family member)

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